

Comity

Certain problems affecting interdenominational relations in mission work from time to time claim the attention of the Executive Committee. It is well perhaps that a statement should be made of the Committee's position as respects an issue of some prominence in the relation of missionary organizations, namely, the plan of division of territory in newly occupied regions. Our missionaries have joined in a movement in the Philippine Islands by which definite territory was provisionally set apart for the several societies engaged in work in the islands. The Committee believe that such a plan favors economy and efficiency in mission work. They have definitely held that these lines of division must not be pressed so far as to deny to any individual the right to decide for himself the question of church relationship; to do this would be to intrude upon the rights of conscience and to restrict the working of the divine Spirit. But the Committee believe that in the planning and prosecuting of work lines of territorial division may wisely be accepted and recognized.

The Committee, however, have no expectation that these dividing lines will permanently be controlling. It is significant that the American Board was thwarted in its earlier intention to abstain from occupying Tokyo in Japan, as Christians from its field in the south, journeying to the capital, desired to join the church with which they were affiliated, so that, by the testimony of the Board, almost in spite of themselves, they were forced to occupy the capital. Your Committee have not shared the thought of some theorists that it would be possible, even if it were desirable, to conceal from the people of the Philippine Islands the fact that differences of conviction regarding certain questions of truth and duty are found among Christian people. There would be a species of insincerity in the attempt, and it could not be successful in the intercommunication characterizing the present age. The free circulation of literature between our own and other countries of itself makes it certain that differences in views and practice prevailing in America will be known in other lands.

In our judgment there is no escape from acceptance on the part of Christian churches of full responsibility for the influence of their divergent organization and teaching. Whatever differences are maintained by Christian bodies in America are quite certain to reproduce themselves in mission lands. Whatever is unessential, whatever is not rooted in the divine Word, should be abandoned here as well as there.

The obvious duty of all engaged in mission work is to direct the attention of the people to the one source of Christian teaching, influencing them to independence of human opinion and to sole reliance upon standards divinely given. But as respects existing conditions we are strongly convinced that the true basis of harmony in mission lands is to be found not in concealment of honest conviction, but in the maintenance of that Christian fraternity which should always be controlling in Christian intercourse. We have never been of those who believe that Christian brethren cannot work side by side with mutual courtesy and respect. The true corrective of the evils apprehended among missionary workers is to be found in emphasis upon the deeper unity of all Christian disciples and in the manifestation of that unity in all forms of fraternal cooperation and in respect for the convictions of others when these differ from one's own. We cannot believe that where this deeper unity manifests itself the interests of evangelical Christianity will suffer from discovery of the divergent views. Heathen faiths are divided into multitudinous sects. The Eastern scholars who becomes acquainted with innumerable schools of Western philosophy will not be disturbed by the existence of honest differences among Christians. The essential unity of the "Jesus religion" will not fail to win recognition in heathen lands, and the emphasis placed by Protestantism upon personal freedom and responsibility, as contrasted with the compulsory uniformity of Rome, will be distinct-

ly for the advantage of Protestant work.

The policy followed by the Committee, then, is that of provisional defining of territory where the ends of the work may thus temporarily best served. Its permanent policy is that of self-respecting loyalty to truth, combined with fraternal cooperation in common Christian enterprises, and with unfailing courtesy and Christian affection for all who work in the name of Christ.

In the conduct of our Philippine work correspondence has been had during the year with the Presbyterian Board of Missions, the Boards having desired a re-adjustment in the division of territory in the Visayan field made by the resident missionaries in the carrying out of the plans recommended by the Evangelical Union of the islands. The division has seemed to the Executive Committee a just one in that, while it allows to the Union a relatively large population in one of the two dialects of the Visayan language, it has left to the Presbyterians the entire territory of the other dialect. An extended correspondence has been held, which may be made available for those interested to read it. The harmony and personal fellowship existing upon the field between the workers of the Union and those of the Presbyterian Board is cause for hearty satisfaction to both societies and is an honor to the Christian name.

A word may be appropriately be added regarding the publication of the New Testament Scriptures in the Visayan language. This work has been accomplished with painstaking care by our missionaries, having been far advanced by the labors of Mr. Lund and Senor Manikan, his native associate, before the time of their leaving Spain for the Philippine Islands. In this rendering, the Greek word for "baptism" is faithfully translated. The term in use in the Philippine churches, originally signifying "to throw" water, had become thoroughly infected by the superstitious associations which had gathered about the rite. Mr. Lund, having to choose between the introduction of a new and neutral word and a faithful rendering of the original, followed the course indicated believing that it was due to the people that he should give them as faithfully as he was able the teaching of Christ. The British and Foreign Bible Society requested the privilege of publishing this work, and a considerable edition was issued by that society and widely circulated. In the distribution of the territory of the Islands afterward made between the British Society and the American Bible Society, the former organization withdrew from the Visayan work, and since that time the publication and circulation of the Scriptures have been in the hands of our own missionaries. By request of the American Bible Society, which represents in this the desire of the Presbyterian Board, free consent has been given by your Committee for the printing of this translation by that society for its own use, with the substitution of the neutral word "baptism", the transliteration of the original Greek, for the Visayan term employed by our missionaries.

County

## RESOLUTIONS OF THE CONFERENCE.

It is the judgment of this Conference that the political and military relations into which the United States has been so strangely forced with reference to Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippine Islands and Ladrone Islands, involve certain moral and religious responsibilities which are, perhaps, quite independent of the precise character of the political relationship which may hereafter be formed with them, that the Christian people of America should immediately and prayerfully consider the duty of entering the door which God in his providence is thus opening. We believe that, this feeling represents the deep and solemn Christian patriotism of the country, and that support will be given to the Boards for this purpose.

In view of the fact that the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions has for years been conducting work in the Caroline Islands, and that the population of those Islands is not sufficient to justify the presence of more than one missionary agency, we RECOMMEND That the Caroline Islands be deemed the distinctive field of the American Board.

The Conference notes the fact that seven Boards have either already undertaken work in Cuba or are expecting to undertake it, namely, the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, the General Conference of Free Baptists, the Foreign Missionary Society of the United Brethren in Christ, The American Church Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church, and the New York and Indiana Yearly Meeting of Friends.

That three Boards contemplate work in Porto Rico, namely, the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and possibly the Southern Baptist Convention.

And that three Boards are seriously disposed to consider the opening of missionary work in the Philippine Islands, namely, the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the American Baptist Missionary Union.

We feel that it would be quite unfortunate if several Boards were to enter any one of these fields at the same time, except, of course, in large centres of population, thus unnecessarily duplicating expense and perhaps introducing elements of rivalry. We have heard much in recent years of the principles of comity, and we are earnestly striving to promote these principles in lands which are already jointly occupied. We believe that the new situation thus providentially forced upon us affords an excellent opportunity not only for beginning this work but for beginning it right from the view point of Christian fellowship and the economical use of men and money.

We therefore RECOMMEND

1st. That each of the Boards mentioned appoint a committee of two on the field or fields which it thinks of entering, each group of committees to confer with a view to a frank and mutual understanding as

to the most effective and equitable distribution of the territory and work under the several Boards.

2d. That the Committee take early steps to secure all available information regarding these various islands as missionary fields, and that all information thus obtained be shared with the other committees concerned, with a view to subsequent action.

3d. That the Committee on the Philippine Islands be requested to inform the American Board that no Board has expressed an intention of undertaking work in the Ladrone Islands and that the question was raised as to whether the equipment of the American Board in connection with the Caroline group does not better fit it for work in the Ladrone Islands if it should become expedient to undertake it.

Enclosed letter of Dr. J.B. Rodgers, Manila, March 6, 08.

One of the most important religious meetings of the year was that of the Evangelical Union, which was held in the Presbyterian Church on the 25th and 26th of February. The meetings were attended by no one outside of the missions participating and no especial effort was made to secure the attendance of the Christian public. It was as much a meeting of specialists as that of the medical association which was held at the same time. The papers and discussions were of especial interest to the ministers and other missionaries. No attempt was made to give but the barest notice to the press for the reason that the papers discussed were of interest to the audiences alone. Nevertheless the study of the work and the principles of missions was of great profit. The missionary of today needs ~~in~~ not only to have faith in God and a heart full of love to his fellowmen but also to know what experience and history teach and what are the basic principles of the work of establishing a new church in a land like this.

Besides the missionaries resident in Manila there were present Bishop J.C. Mills and Messrs. Widdoes and Kurtz of the United Brethren Mission in the province of La Union. The Union enjoyed greatly the forceful and helpful counsels of Bishop Mills.

Dr. and Mrs. Steinritz and Mr. McIntire of the Baptist Mission in the Visayans were present as well as Mr. Glanz of the Silliman Institute and Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton of the Presbyterian Mission at Pagsanjan.

Devotional exercises were led by Bishop Mills each day who also made the formal address on the evening of the 25th.

The first paper was prepared by Rev. Chas. W. Briggs of the Baptist Mission, Jaro Iloilo. The paper was an excellent and profound discussion of the question of how to establish self support in the Filipino

churches. Mr. Briggs took the position that the natural condition of a group of Christians was to support themselves, provide their own chapels, make proper return to those who preached to them according to their ability and that the reason why such a condition does not pertain in the churches is because the missionary impedes it by ill-advised assistance in the building of chapels and payment of evangelists.

He said that a missionary could hamper his work by being of an aristocratic temperament and manner and thereby being separated from the real heart of the simple people; by living away from the people and thus keeping them from knowing his power and the value of his message; by ill-advised use of funds in nourishing and building up the infant church. Point was given to these criticisms by examples from Mr. Briggs' wonderful success among the peasant and mountain folk of Panay. He modified his statements by saying that what was true in the environment in which he worked might not be true in the fields of the other missions. In the discussion that followed this very able paper most of the speakers while differing from Mr. Briggs in the details of his plan spoke in praise of the principles enunciated.

The Rev. George William Wright of the Presbyterian Mission read a paper on the possibility of Union work among the Missions in education. He discussed principally the possibility of a joint Bible school and theological seminary and supported by the experience of the Methodist and Presbyterian Missions in their Seminary work during the passed year. He also spoke of the desire of many of the missions to see an evangelical college founded here in Manila. Subsequently a joint committee consisting of Messrs. Wright, Farmer, Williams, Robbins and Funnell were appointed to take into consideration these ideas and forward if possible the project.

The Rev. Harry Farmer of the Methodist Mission made a brief address on the possibility of utilizing local customs in our work. He spoke of the opportunity offered for the preaching of the Gospel at special occasions such as funerals, baptisms, marriages and the town festivals and on the great festivals of the Christian church. He told in an interesting way of the processions organized by the missionaries and ministers of their church wherein Bible texts and the ten commandments emblazoned on banners and accompanied by music and crowds were carried in solemn procession through the streets of the towns, frequent stops being made to allow of preaching on the different words.

Dr. Rodgers of the Presbyterian Mission read a paper on "Some questions concerning the relations of the Government and the Missions." He discussed in an impartial way the various delicate questions that arise from time to time. He spoke of the courtesies extended to clergymen of all faiths by the military and civil governments. He discussed the question of the religious rights of employees of the civil government, especially those of the teachers and endeavored to show that the policy of the government while open to some objections, was probably the wisest and fairest possible under the peculiar conditions existent here.

The question of how far a minister should go in espousing the cause of his people in the courts was also discussed. He pointed out the necessity of doing away forever with the idea existent among the Filipinos that the Protestant minister or Catholic priest has inherited the political influence of the friar and of teaching the people to trust the courts and the duly constituted officers of the law. If protest is ever necessary it should be done according to regular process. The writer of the paper feels that in regard to moral questions that affect the community at large, the churches as represented by their ministers have a perfect right to make their ideas known and to protest publicly

in things that threaten the good name of the city. In this they are exercising the common right of all citizens.

Several matters of importance were discussed at the annual business meeting. A committee consisting of Messrs. McLaughlin, Farmer, Lamb, Kershner, Dr. Steinmiz and Mr. Murtz were appointed to consider the possibility of the publishing of a common newspaper in English for all the Missions, one that should represent the Evangelical churches and be an inspiration for all that is good in the American population of the islands.

No questions affecting the division of territory or the relations of the different missions came before the executive committee this year. The general spirit was excellent and there was abundant proof of the true unity of Christian purpose and cooperation that inspires the missions at work in the islands. The success of the Methodist- Presbyterian theological Seminary- the union hospital of Presbyterians and Baptists in Iloilo and the plans for the future all indicate that the spirit of unity is a very real thing in our church life in the islands.

Officers were elected for the coming year as follows: President , Rev. Chas. . Briggs, Vice-Presidents, Revs. J.L. McLaughlin and Robert F. Black, Chairman of the Executive Committee, Rev. Harry Farmer and Secretary Treasurer, Rev. James B. Rodgers, D.D.

(Please forward to my father who can read and forward to Dr. Brown/ New York) This is a report of the meeting which I prepared for the Philippine Christian Advocate of the M.E. Church,

(signed) James B. Rodgers.